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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF NAVAL PREPAREDNESS

BY JOSEPHUS DANIELS,

Secretary of the Navy.

Fifty years ago there lived in my home town, Raleigh, N. C., an eloquent orator and distinguished Senator, by name George E. Badger, Secretary of the Navy under Harrison. Writing a letter of introduction for Badger to Choate, Daniel Webster said: "As a lawyer, he is your equal and my superior." He had the habit, peculiar to his generation—could we not revive it to the literary excellence of our public addresses—of practicing his most important speeches upon some person or persons of sensitive organism to determine how they would take when delivered. There is a tradition that, called upon to speak to a mixed audience, and anxious that he should sense the popular will, Mr. Badger, when he had written his address, stopped at his grocer's one afternoon and rather astonished the grocer by asking him to call at his home that evening as he wished to consult him upon an important matter. The surprised grocer, dressed in his best, presented himself at the appointed time at the home of the learned judge. "I have asked you to call," said Judge Badger, "because I wish to read you a speech I am to make in the court-house tomorrow and desire your opinion upon what impression it will make on those who will hear it," and, without ceremony, proceeded to read his speech to the untaught dispenser of flour and sugar. It was truly an eloquent address, couched in stately diction, upholding the Websterian doctrine of the indissoluble union of indestructible states, made when the South was in the throes that preceded the war between the states.

When he had finished reading—he had a musical voice (with cadence and passion), and had read his address with emphasis—he turned to his single enraptured audience and asked: "What is your opinion, sir, of the address?" The grocer could not command words of praise to express his approval and delight, and declared it to be the most eloquent utterance that ever fell from the lips of man. As he was leaving, he said: "Judge, I am, as you know, an uneducated man, not a judge of style. May I ask you

why you did me the honor to select me as the man upon whom to try out your speech instead of some scholarly citizen whose opinion would have been of more value than mine?" "Certainly," replied the Judge. "I did not wish the opinion of any scholar or orator. I wanted to try my speech on the common mind; therefore I sent for you."

When honored by your invitation to come to Philadelphia tonight¹ and participate in a discussion on "The Significance of Preparedness," I thought it might not be amiss to interview my two youngest sons and see if it were still true, as of old times, that wisdom was found in the heart of a child. The first one to respond to the inquiry, "What is the significance of preparedness?" was my fourteen-year-old boy, who is preparing to become an editor, and who said: "Preparedness is a premium on an insurance policy." My youngest, who aspires to wear the stars of an admiral, was quick to give his definition in these words:

If a man is walking along the street where there are rough men nobody will attack him if they see he has a big gun in his pocket. But if the same crowd sees him walking along without a gun, he may be slugged. The significance of preparedness is to carry a gun if you wish nobody to hurt you.

In the multitude of speeches that have been made on "preparedness," from the hysterical utterances of the disciples of "Blood-to-the-Bridles" to the soothing preachings of the "Peace-at-any-price" advocates, I doubt if any of the well-considered definitions of the significance of preparedness has given so clear and correct an answer as these youthful militant young Americans.

We have sat at the feet of no greater teacher than Benjamin Franklin, the greatest editor, the greatest printer, the greatest philosopher of the New World and exemplar in all that goes to make real preparedness. Since I have been Secretary of the Navy, the lessons he taught in the art of being ready have been particularly inspiring. Poor Richard said—and it is quoted the world over—"There never was a good war or a bad peace," and men have taken that text, without reading the life of that eminently practical man, and used it as an argument against any measure of preparedness. It was his conviction, when he wrote his almanac, that there

¹ This address was delivered before the American Academy of Political and Social Science at its Twentieth Annual Meeting, session of Friday evening, April 28, 1916.

could be no good war. But there came a day in his life when he found that every principle he held dear, the very liberties of his people, depended upon real and thorough preparedness, and I do not think that in our history we have an example of any statesman and leader who in the early days more thoroughly aroused public sentiment to this end than did this Philadelphia editor.

The career of Franklin was a perfect exemplification of Washington's plea for a uniform and well-digested plan of preparation. He exercised the utmost common sense. His energies stimulated and set the pace for the other colonies, however inadequate and incomplete their degree of preparation may be regarded as judged by modern standards.

Franklin had his troubles with the Quakers during King George's War. Their conscientious scruples against war had embittered the other colonists and led them to an attitude of hostility or indifference to defense measures. Franklin compared this Quaker element to "him who refused to pump in a sinking ship, because one on board would be saved as well as himself." In the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, of which he was editor, he prosecuted his plans for preparedness. As he himself says in his famous pamphlet, *Plain Truth*: "I stated our defenseless situation in strong light with the necessity of union and discipline for our defense." He called mass meetings; he organized military companies; he saw that the members of these companies were properly drilled; he got the good women to make banners and devise mottoes for them; he practiced what he preached and was able to state: "I regularly took my turn of duty there (at the battery) as a common soldier"; he organized a lottery to raise funds; he bought or begged cannon from every quarter where it was possible to secure them; he tactfully pandered to the Quakers in the state legislature, in wording a bill to appropriate £3,000, by using language like this: "For the purchase of bread, flour, wheat or other grains," and it was well understood that he meant by "other grains" gunpowder. It was while he was so actively engaged in preparing for the defense of Pennsylvania that there was born in his mind the idea of an eventual inter-colonial union.

Franklin's common sense was never more fully illustrated than in his advice and counsel to General Braddock. Franklin was a tower of strength all throughout the French and Indian War. If

Braddock, ungracious and contemptuous upon the whole, had heeded Franklin, he probably would not have met with defeat and death on his way to Fort Duquesne. He sneered at Franklin's distinct warning against the dangers of Indian ambuscade. Braddock was writhing in disgust at this time because Virginia and Maryland had supplied his army with only 25 wagons for his transport and commissary. Franklin, through his paper and by his influence, quickly secured 150 wagons and 259 "carrying horses" for Braddock from among the thrifty Pennsylvania farmers. He also furnished 20 pack horses for poorly paid officers in Braddock's force. Braddock was naturally delighted with Franklin and in his letters to the home government accorded him the highest praise for his foresight and efficiency. Franklin even went into debt by giving bond for £20,000 sterling for the wagons and supplies which he had furnished to Braddock, and this debt haunted him for a long time until it was finally assumed by the Colonial Government of Massachusetts. That the Revolution, against overwhelming odds, was finally decided on the side of liberty was largely due to the foresight and efforts of Franklin to make preparation.

His example of loving peace, of hating war and yet recognizing that no people ever secured and maintained liberty who were not able to defend it, compelled the colonists to make whatever preparation was necessary. So that I invoke the example of one who did not hesitate to change his opinion—to put under foot his own maxim, "There is no good war and no bad peace."

In our days of stress and anxiety, our eyes have turned, perhaps as never before in all history, to the Navy. From the good hour when John Paul Jones secured the first salute to our flag on the waters, in every time of national crisis the Navy has played an heroic and generally vital part in the preservation of our liberties. There never was a time when it was called upon that it did not compel the nation's pride and gratitude. Jones and his compeers made its name a terror upon the seas. Perry on Lake Erie and Macdonough on Lake Champlain built their own fleets and won decisive victories. It was the American Navy that drove piracy from the Mediterranean. American history has been tardy in doing justice to the Navy's part in the war between the states and to the administration of the war-time secretary, Gideon Welles. It was when he, in close conference with Abraham Lincoln, bottled up the

seaports of the South, and put an end to blockade running, that the Confederacy was smothered to death.

We have come to a day when we cannot wait for war to create a navy. Macdonough required eighty days to fell the trees, build the ships and win a victory on Champlain, but modern super-dreadnaughts and battle-cruisers cannot be constructed so quickly. No battleship has been built under three years, and, up to the last few years, it has taken five and six years to build our greatest ships. If we are to have a Navy strong and powerful, we must look ahead and provide for it in times of profound peace. The issue before the American people has passed from the question of whether we should have a navy or not, or a strong navy or not. Upon that question the American people are agreed. The question is how soon and how strong shall we create our Navy.

In 1903 the General Board of the Navy, headed by that illustrious naval officer, Admiral George Dewey, recommended to the Secretary of the Navy a naval program providing for the construction annually of two of the largest ships that could be built, with a number of lesser craft, which, if carried out, would have given in 1919 forty-eight dreadnaughts and the complements thereof. But the people and the officials were so little interested in this program, announced to the Department of the Navy but held confidentially from the American people, who never heard of it for a dozen years, that it remained a sealed book; and, in the very year after it was written, the Secretary of the Navy went before the Naval Affairs Committee and recommended only one battleship and one gunboat, and President Roosevelt in 1907, in his message to Congress, declared: "I do not ask that we continue to increase our Navy." And from that day interest in the Navy in high office and among the people lagged.

Yet there were far-seeing men who secured the construction of a number of dreadnaughts not surpassed by any nation of the world, and now, for the first time in many years, there is an aroused public sentiment that this country, proud of the Navy it has, glad that it is as strong as it is, is determined that it shall be larger and that it shall be stronger.

The sixty-third Congress, before the European war cloud lowered, began, upon a scale larger than any previous Congress, to strengthen our Navy. It authorized the construction of five dread-

naughts and increased the appropriation for new construction from twenty-two million dollars to seventy million dollars. It rather went ahead of a quiescent public, which did not feel the necessity because the merchant marine had disappeared.

When I became Secretary of the Navy, the first duty that pressed itself upon me was to secure enough men in the Navy to fill the complements of all our ships. Although Congress the previous August had authorized four thousand additional men, the enlisted personnel had absolutely declined more than one hundred from August to March, and we were short 4,700 men. Enlistments, circulars and invitations did not bring us the type of young men we needed in the Navy. Unless you have the man behind the gun and the right sort of man, you have no preparedness in the real sense.

There was a time when parents did not desire their sons to join the Navy. And when enlistments expired, it was not easy for the discharged bluejacket to get a position, because the Navy did not then train the minds of the men at all or their hands in skill so thoroughly as now. The first few days I was in office, I noticed on a placard inviting young men into the service a picture of half dressed women in the tropics, with sailors and marines lounging near by. I ordered them to be destroyed. We determined, in the councils of the Navy, that young men should not be enticed into the Navy by inducement to immorality; that they should be better trained for citizenship and for the trades; and that they should find avenues for proper promotion, even to commissioned rank, according to American ideals and traditions, if they continued in the service. The result of that policy, the very basis of preparedness, is that there has been a waiting list in the navy. The enlistment has increased 14 per cent, and a month from now this Congress will add at least sixteen thousand more men to the Navy and the Marine Corps—enough to man all the ships in the American Navy.

You cannot have an institution in America that is not Americanized. Whenever the Navy builds a bulkhead between an American bluejacket of brains and character and a commission, you have an institution that is not American. To this recognition and encouragement, now introduced in the Navy, American boys are responding, and their fathers and mothers for them. In our three

years, we have given commissions as Ensigns to sixteen young men who entered from the ranks. Each year we are appointing fifteen young fellows from the ranks to the Naval Academy. We have appointed fifteen paymasters from this splendid body of young men and one hundred eighty-seven payclerks from the enlisted personnel.

There was a time when the chief thing a man in the Navy needed to know was how to climb the mast and give a cheerful "aye, aye, sir." The battleship of today is the most complicated piece of machinery in the world, and there is no place on it for ignorance. It is a place for skill, and a skill which the Navy must itself furnish. On the old *Constitution*, at Newport, R. I., there is a radio school where lads from the interior and from the coast, from homes of the well-to-do and from homes where the father toils in the mill and the mother serves at her machine, are mastering the mysteries of wireless. It was with a peculiar satisfaction that I saw them there, some of them just beginning, their keen zest for the task shining in their eyes; others on the eve of departure to take their responsible positions in the fleet. An honorable discharge from the Navy means so much today as a recommendation that a sharper in a Connecticut town printed forged discharges and sold them to youths who could not obtain a place without that easy passport to position.

When the Senate of the United States was considering the Army Bill last week there was incorporated in that bill an idea which Lew Wallace wrote to Sumner: "The only hope of a great American Army is to educate the soldiers, and, when we establish a school in every regiment, we will secure all the men we need for our Army." That provision is now in the Army Reorganization Act. The idea has been carried out in the Navy for three years. The German armies in the trenches in Europe put a similar plan into effect early in the war. Opportunity for education and promotion will attract to our Army and Navy young men of aspiration, of courage, and of ability. And nothing else will.

The problem of officers in both the Army and Navy is a serious one. There has been but one institution for producing them in the Navy, and that is the Naval Academy at Annapolis. The sixty-third Congress passed an act continuing a law about to lapse authorizing the appointment of five hundred thirty-one additional

officers in the Navy. The present Congress has passed a similar act and so popular is the service that, when the examiner opened his doors last week, two thousand young men went up to stand the examination although only five hundred can be appointed.

We are even going outside the Naval Academy, in our present emergency, to secure officers, and the bill now pending in Congress provides for the appointment of eighty aviators from civil life so as to secure officers to meet the needs of that growing arm of the service. I am told by gentlemen who have traveled in Europe that the men who have made the best reputation are daring young chaps from eighteen to twenty-two, with what is really a sixth sense—that of flying. We are going to open doors in our hydro-aeroplane service to young men of this kind, and we are going to the colleges and universities and technical schools to add needed engineers.

There are pending in Congress several measures for increasing the Navy. My prediction is that Congress will authorize as many battleships, submarines and destroyers as the private navy yards of this country can build in the next three years. In this connection let me say that, for the rapid increase of the Navy, we are dependent not only upon naval officers, and upon Congress, but also upon the manufacturers of America. Most of my time for a month has been spent in keeping in touch with these men, urging them to speed up, so that they can furnish the material with which to build our ships promptly. In most instances they have responded readily, and I am one of those who believe that whenever a national emergency is presented to American business men they will respond, even if there is the attraction of larger profits from foreign countries.

Modern wars are being fought with machinery. The engineers who handle the 42-centimeter guns and the manipulators of motors and the delicate machinery in heavier-than-air monoplanes and biplanes are as essential to victory as the soldiers who charge bayonets. We are reading of army corps being held in check by "curtains of fire." But we have not realized until recently that real preparedness is dependent upon the mobilization of industries and the card-indexing of inventive genius, as well as the providing of war munitions. With no hope of reward, save the gratitude of the country, eleven engineering and scientific societies last July, upon my invitation, named two distinguished members each to serve on what is now known as the Naval Consulting Board. These scien-

tists, in conjunction with men of similar inventive and scientific genius and training in the Navy, are materially aiding us in new lines of invention and construction, giving weeks and months of their time to the study of serious naval problems. There is not a perfect or wholly satisfactory motor for submarine or aeroplane in the world. Abroad three aeroplanes are required for every flier. Erosion in guns makes their life and serviceability short. To the solution of these problems American science has responded with the same alacrity with which patriots answer the call to the colors. There is incorporated in the pending Naval Bill before Congress an appropriation for a million and a half dollars for an experimental laboratory, in which these men of science may make experiments and try to solve problems which are to be solved for national defense. And the President in his message to Congress called upon that body to coöperate with him in securing the aid of these thinking, originative, investigative minds.

We have learned something from the European war. When it began the people of Great Britain had the idea, as most nations have had, that the nation with the most money was certain to win, and they congratulated themselves that they had as the Chancellor of the Exchequer that wonderful man who knew, Moses-like, how to smite rocks out of which revenues would gush in abundance. But the war did not last long before the English people took Lloyd George from the place of Chancellor of the Exchequer and raised him to Minister of Munitions, to a new and higher place, because they found that no matter how much money a nation had, unless it had a man in high place who could mobilize the industries, who could marry science to money in readiness for defense, they could not be prepared for great emergencies. In France, a new cabinet officer has been created. He occupies a like place to that held by Lloyd George in England. All the world knows that in Germany science and preparedness have been married for many years. If we are to have real preparedness in this country, every factory in America must be able and ready to make some sort of munitions. They must have the government gauges and patterns, ready to install at a moment's notice. We have now an organization, composed of five of the chief engineers and scientists, in every state in the Union, with 36,000 active assistants who voluntarily and without compensation are giving their time and their genius to helping

the Navy to be ready in its comprehensive program of preparedness.

The American Navy is our first line of protection. It is the right arm of defense, the protector of the American home. Let us not be misguided into thinking that we have a navy as strong as it ought to be. Let us uphold the hands of the members of Congress who are laboring to make our navy larger and stronger, but, while we do that, let us not give ear to those who say hysterically, as a certain perfervid orator said a few night ago, speaking to the Real Estate Exchange of New York, "Gentlemen, I never go to bed at night without expecting the next morning that some foreign foe will blow this town up. We have no Army, we have no coast defence, we have no Navy, we have nothing." And then, he added, with what he thought would carry weight: "I feel so keenly about this, that I wouldn't invest a dollar in real estate in New York." His audience, dependent for support upon the traffic in real estate, received this absurd statement with derisive laughter. Men who are so pessimistic and so ignorant about what is being done remind me of the maiden ladies in Boston who, during the Spanish-American War, sent delegations to Washington and wanted the whole fleet to lie outside of Boston harbor to protect them from the Spanish Navy which they daily thought they saw in the offing.

In this matter of preparedness in America, we shall, now that we are awake, go forward steadily, rapidly and earnestly, to repair the lack of building for the past dozen years, and we shall build a navy here of such size and strength as the American people need. We cannot build it in a day, because battleships are of slow growth; but the sentiment is now aroused, and we now have before us the problems of promptly securing the construction of the ships that, Congress will authorize. I trust there will be no need for us to commandeer the private yards, for I am one of those who believe that, whatever the need of America may be, Americans will be equal to the task.